

BRIEFS

SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION MEETING VIDEO RELEASED

COLUMBUS, Ohio (BP) — The Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting 2015 Video Recap, which can be shared through social media as well as church and small group settings, is now available. At just under 11 minutes in length, the video reproduces highlights from the annual meeting June 16-17 at the Greater Columbus Convention Center in Columbus Oh. The direct online link to the SBC 2015 Video Recap is <https://vimeo.com/133792917>.

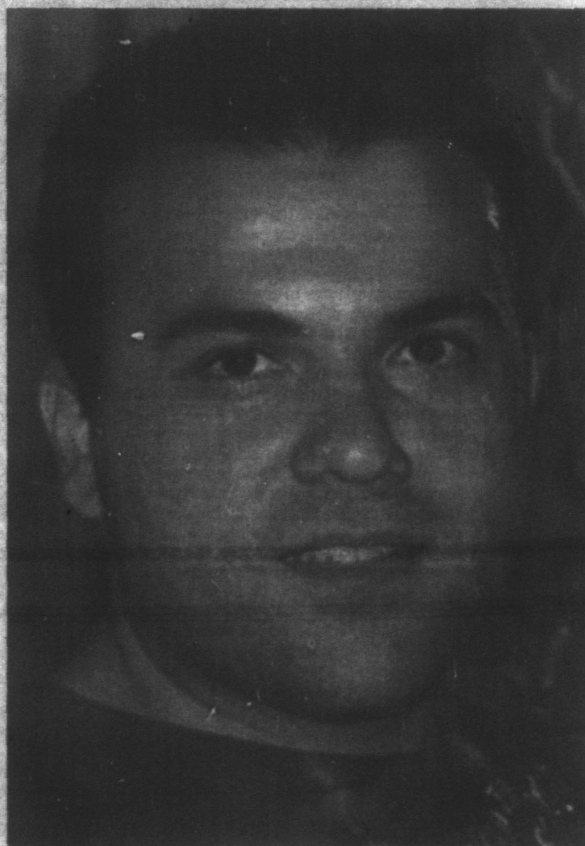
B&H PUBLISHING GROUP NETS RECORD NUMBER OF AWARDS

NASHVILLE (BP) — B&H Publishing Group, a division of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention, dominated the 2015 Christian Retailing's Best Awards by garnering a record 20 awards. The awards demonstrate the success of B&H's new strategy of publishing fewer titles each year and focusing more intently on each release, said Jennifer Lyell, B&H Trade Book publisher.

JEANNIE ELLIFF DIES AT AGE 69 AFTER LONG CANCER STRUGGLE

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — Jeannie Elliff, 69, former missionary and wife of former International Mission Board (IMB) President Tom Elliff, died July 20 at her home in Oklahoma City following a long struggle with cancer. Elliff, who had fought two previous bouts with cancer, was diagnosed a third time in summer 2014. A memorial service was held July 24 at First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Ok.

Abedini release not part of deal



ABEDINI

American pastor, others left behind in nuke negotiation

WASHINGTON (BP) — Though America's release of four Iranian prisoners in 2012-13 was viewed by some as part of a deal for Iran's release of three captured American hikers, a Wall Street Journal report suggests the prisoner releases were also related to a private series of negotiations that paved the way for this month's controversial nuclear agreement between the U.S. and the Islamic extremist country.

The prisoner releases, which were first reported years ago, has spurred fresh criticism of the Obama administration's failure to secure the release of American pastor Saeed Abedini and three other Americans missing or detained in Iran, as part of the most recent nuclear deal.

"Are the Iranian guards going by Pastor Abedini's cell and saying, 'They didn't even try to put you in the deal, pastor?'" asked Frank Wolf, a retired Republican congressman from Virginia and a human rights advocate. "It has always been a fact of life that when America raises [political prisoners] by name over and over and over, that makes

their life better in prison... and is the fastest way to get them out of prison."

Release of American detainees "probably should have even been a precondition" of nuclear negotiations, Wolf said, with Iranian diplomats being told at the start, "We won't even begin to sit down and begin to talk until you release them." At minimum, the release of American prisoners "should have been a part of any deal."

Abedini, a native of Iran and a naturalized American citizen, has been imprisoned since 2012 for his Christian faith. He remains incarcerated in Iran along with journalist Jason Rezaian and former Marine Amir Hekmati. Retired FBI agent Robert Levinson has been missing in Iran since 2007. July 22 marked the one-year anniversary of Rezaian's captivity.

The Journal reported June 28 that, beginning in 2009, Iran relayed to U.S. officials names of prisoners it wanted released from custody in the West. Communicating secretly through

see DEAL on p. 9

LifeWay purchases downtown Nashville site for new building

NASHVILLE (BP) — An offer by LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention to purchase 1.5 acres in downtown Nashville for a new office building has been accepted, LifeWay announced July 21.

The city's Metro Development and Housing Agency (MDHA), which owns the property, unanimously approved sale of the site for \$12.7 million, with a tax incentive of \$4.9 million that can fund specific aspects of the construction — effectively reducing the purchase cost to less than eight million dollars.

Meanwhile, LifeWay is moving toward finalizing the sale of

its current 14.5-acre campus off Broadway Avenue in downtown Nashville, which includes more than one million square feet of office space, to a consortium of local and national developers later this summer. The sales price of LifeWay's present facilities has not been released by the buyers.

LifeWay's new building, located one mile across downtown Nashville from the present campus, will encompass 216,000 square feet. The number of stories of the facility is in the design process.

The new location is a few blocks south of Nashville's Broadway District — a popular

shopping and entertainment area — and across the Cumberland River from Nissan Stadium, home of the NFL's Tennessee Titans football team.

Thom S. Rainer, LifeWay's president, said in a letter to employees that the new location "will be exciting for our employees and visitors, and will provide us opportunities to serve the millions of people who work, live, and visit Nashville's central business district each year."

The project's construction contractor and architects have

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AUG 05 2015



From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

It can (and does) happen here

Some time ago, The Baptist Record received this letter after an article was published on the importance of protecting our children at church. The author's name is being withheld. An edited version of his letter reads:

I still remember a Baptist preacher who molested me. I was twelve and thirteen years old. He stayed at our home while leading our church's revival. My parents, like everyone in the church, thought he was just great. I never told anyone what he did until I was grown and then only my wife. I'm sure he molested many other youth during his career.

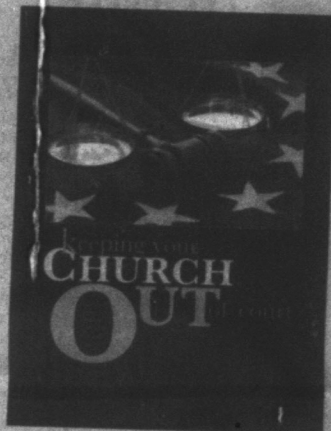
A program that aired recently on Mississippi Public Radio quoted a Colorado law enforcement study which found the average pedophile arrested in Colorado molested around 180 different victims during their lifetime. I would assume the same holds true for Mississippi pedophiles.

A year or so ago I learned that this man is retired and living in Mississippi. I suffered no lasting emotional damage from his actions and forgave him long ago. I know I should have reported him to authorities at the time, or as soon as I became old enough to fully understand what he was doing, but I didn't. I see no purpose in naming him at this point. He is probably too old to hurt anyone now and whatever damage he did, has been done.

Certainly our churches today need to be more vigilant than were the churches of my youth.

We tend to read about such violations in faraway places and comfort ourselves with the thought that it couldn't happen here. It does happen in Mississippi Baptist churches that are unprepared.

There are concrete steps that churches can take to shrink the risk almost to zero. First, qualified legal counsel should always be on call to deal with any num-



ber of issues that could arise. Another good start would be to acquire the publication, Keeping Your Church Out of Court, a step-by-step manual available for a \$10 charge from the Pastor/Leadership Development Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

Topics covered in the manual include Church Organization and Operation; Church Liability; Decision Makers Liability and Protection; Employment Law; Taxes and Governmental Compliance; and a number of model forms such as articles of incorporation, how to craft a church constitution, volunteer worker applications, and a child abuse prevention policy checklist.

No system is perfect and no plan is flawless, but every Mississippi Baptist church should take the actions necessary to shield our precious children from this ever-growing danger in our midst. For several decades now, sexualizing children has been one of the most serious problems in American culture, and it is sinking into our once-unimpeachable institutions and churches.

The consequences of letting down our guard are too high. Too much is at stake, up to and including the souls of our children. Get started today.

Pray, then pray some more

The West is at the front end of what will almost certainly be a multi-decadal war against radical Islamism. We saw so again in the killing of five servicemen in Chattanooga.

Others, better informed than I, can report on the details and debates around the July 16 tragedy. Yet it is increasingly clear that this will be a global war for many years, often made up by lone-wolf attacks in the West, wars against religious minorities in the Middle East, and various terror attacks around the world.

Many thoughts come to mind, and many more issues should be considered. However, in this brief space I simply would like to suggest three things we might want to consider, uniquely for those of us who call ourselves followers of Jesus in light of His words about our neighbors, enemies, and government.

First, we must love our neighbors, including our Muslim ones. The fact is, the vast majority of Muslims in this country want to live peaceful lives. They are our neighbors and often our friends.

As an evangelical leader and researcher, I have no vested interest in — and receive no personal benefit from — speaking out for my Muslim neighbors and friends. Yet while it is irresponsible not to see the link between radical Islam and terrorism, it is the height of ignorance to assume that all (or most or even many) Muslims are terrorists.

Most of the Muslims we know are kind people who love their families, their communities, and their country. Our proper response to them is to listen to the simple words of Jesus: "Love your neighbor" (Mark 12:31).

Second, we must pray for and love our enemies, even our radical Islamist ones. Yes, that's what Jesus taught and it sure sounds unrealistic or even offensive today. To some, the words "love your enemies" (Matthew 5:44) must not apply to us today — it's too unrealistic. But they do. While that's not the only thing on the subject that matters, it does matter. Hence, I am praying for Islamists and other Muslims around the world. I also know God has ordained governments that will oppose the violent efforts of these radical Islamists — and I am also praying for them.

Third, we must recognize the major concerns of religious liberty and violence, and that they are overwhelmingly concentrated in majority Muslim countries. In a cover story I wrote for Christianity Today, I advocated for the rights of all people, including those of other faiths, to share their faith — to



Guest opinion
with Ed Stetzer

proselytize. Yet, that right is indeed restricted in so many Muslim countries.

This is why, perhaps, about half of Americans see Islam as a threat to religious freedom, both in the United States and around the world, according to recently published LifeWay Research data.

As I wrote in an article for Christianity Today: "In the spirit of mutual respect and tolerance, Muslims should be free to build a masjid where they live, and Christians should defend their religious freedom to do so. At the same time, Christians should be free to plant churches in places like Bhutan, the Maldives, Brunei, and Saudi Arabia. No matter where we live or what religion we follow, we should not demand for ourselves that which we are unwilling to grant others — freedom from compulsion, freedom from discrimination on the basis of creed and freedom of conscience."

I pray for religious freedom, and the right to convert, and I am well aware that freedom is prevalent where I live and much more restricted where Muslim majorities do.

Nuance is hard and loud pronouncements are easy in times of anger but as Christians, we don't get to shout whatever rage we feel. Instead, we want the facts and then we want to follow Jesus in light of those facts.

The fact is that radical Islamists make up a small segment of Muslims as a whole. So while yes, there may be some connection, it's unfair to suggest a widespread causal relationship between Islam and terrorism.

In other words, Muslims are not our enemies. Radical Islamists are. Knowing that, we follow Jesus — and Jesus calls us to love and pray for Muslims who are not our enemies, and radical Islamists who are.

That's what the violence in Chattanooga prompted me to do.

Stetzer is executive director of LifeWay Research, a division of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville. This article first appeared at Stetzer's blog at Christianity Today, and appears here courtesy of Baptist Press. Edited for style and length.

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MISSISSIPPI BAPTISTS

VOLUME 139 • NUMBER 30 • ISSN-0005-5778
Published weekly except weeks of July 4 and Christmas by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, 515 Mississippi Street, Jackson, MS 39201. Subscription \$10.35 per year payable in advance. Economy plans available for cooperating Mississippi churches. Periodicals postage paid at Jackson, MS. Member, Association of State Baptist Papers. Deadlines: News items — one calendar week prior to requested publication date. Advertising — two calendar weeks prior to requested publication date. All submissions are subject to editing.

Texas Supreme Court breathes new life into HERO

HOUSTON (BP and local reports) — The Texas Supreme Court has directed the Houston City Council to abide by its own charter and repeal the controversial Equal Rights Ordinance, known as HERO, or put it up to a city-wide vote this November. The city has until Aug. 24 to comply or be compelled to do so by the high court.

In a rare move, the Texas Supreme Court conditionally granted a writ of mandamus stating "the legislative power reserved to the people of Houston is not being honored." Last year, Houston Mayor Annise Parker, who is married to a woman, and then-City Attorney Dave Feldman, a Parker political appointee, declared "invalid" a referendum to repeal the controversial city ordinance.

Petitioners — a racially and politically diverse group of pastors and civic leaders — sued, alleging the mayor and attorney manufactured signature requirements in order to defy the city charter mandates. The court agreed with the petitioners July 24, stating the city secretary and not the city council is obligated to evaluate petitions.

Enforcement of HERO has been suspended pending the outcome of the legal battle.

"Simply put, the City Secretary's certification started the process outlined in the Charter for reconsidering ordinances following a referendum petition, invoking the Council's ministerial duty to carry out its obligations," the court wrote.

That is what Andy Taylor, attorney for the pastors' coalition, has said all along. "The only person who calls balls and strikes is [City Secretary] Anna Russell," Taylor told the Southern Baptist TEXAN,

news journal of Southern Baptists of Texas. "They can't ignore her and force us to sue."

In a statement released late Friday, Parker wrote, "Obviously, I am disappointed and believe the court is in error with this eleventh hour ruling in a case

that had already been decided by a judge and jury of citizens."

At issue was the "validity" of petition signatures — those of the signers and the circulators. Attorneys for the city argued in court in February the signatures did not meet a prescribed standard and therefore invalidated the petition. Taylor countered that the city created the standards in an effort to keep in force an ordinance the mayor called

"deeply personal." The jury and judge disagreed, and the plaintiffs lost the initial trial. The coalition appealed to the Texas 14th Court of Appeals. With a mid-August deadline for placing the referendum on the city ballot, plaintiffs asked for an expedited hearing. Their request was denied, and the appeal was put on the normative months-long track for a hearing. That would have put any ballot measure off until 2017.

Acknowledging the plaintiffs were pressed for time, the high court wrote, "Under such circumstances, mandamus has long been recognized as an appropriate remedy when city officials improperly refuse to act on a citizen-initiated petition."

Dave Welch, executive director of the Houston Area Pastors Council, the group that spearheaded the petition drive, was grateful for the ruling. Feeling

vindicated, he said, "Obviously, we thank the Lord for providing the perseverance and commitment on the part of our pastors, Andy, and our financial supporters," Welch said. He added, "This is a battle we should not have had to fight."

The coalition charged HERO created "special rights" for Houston's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community at the risk of compromising the constitutional rights afforded citizens, especially people of faith. The ordinance also permits citizens to use the public bathroom of the gender with which they identify — allowing biological males who identify as female to use the women's bathroom.

The referendum garnered 55,000 signatures. Of those, Russell certified 17,846 — more than enough to send the ordinance back to the city council for repeal or vote by the citizens.

"The mere existence of the City's challenge to the petition does not negate the City Council's duty to proceed with the political process," the court wrote. "To hold otherwise would be to allow cities to freely shirk their obligation to follow through on properly certified petitions."

In her statement, Parker said the city would proceed as directed but "at the same time, we are consulting with our outside counsel on any possible available legal actions."

Taylor said there is no legal recourse since the court has spoken. If the city fails to act according to its City Charter, the writ of mandamus will be issued, forcing the city to comply.

Parker and Welch are both confident their respective sides will prevail in a city vote. "We fought for the right to vote and we look forward to that challenge," Welch said. "It's time for the church to act."



PARKER



TAYLOR



FELDMAN



WELCH

Oregon's \$135,000 penalty of bakery couple now finalized

WASHINGTON (BP) — A penalty of \$135,000 and a gag order against Oregon bakers who declined to provide a cake for a same sex ceremony have evoked protests and concerns from Southern Baptist leaders.

Brad Avakian, commissioner of Oregon's Bureau of Labor and Industries, issued an order July 2 against Aaron and Melissa Klein. His order affirmed a proposed payment for damages to a lesbian couple and required the Kleins to refrain from providing notice they will not bake a cake for a same sex wedding.

The Kleins' next step would be the state Court of Appeals.

Aaron Klein — co-owner with his wife of Sweet Cakes by Melissa in Gresham, Or. — based on his Christian convictions declined in January 2013 a request by Laurel Bowman for a cake for her ceremony with Rachel Cryer. The Kleins were willing to serve homosexuals but believed their faith prevents them from baking a cake for a same sex ceremony.

"According to the state of Oregon we neither have freedom of religion or freedom of speech. We will NOT give up this fight, and we will NOT be silenced."

Aaron and Melissa Klein

based on his Christian convictions. As part of his order, Avakian prohibited the Kleins from "publishing, circulating, issuing or displaying ... any communication, notice, advertisement or sign" that effectively indicates they will not provide services to a person based on his or her sexual orientation.

That gag order "effectively strips us of all our first amendment rights," the Kleins said in a July 2 post on the Sweetcakes by Melissa Facebook page. "According to the state of Oregon



VICTIMS OF POLITICAL CORRECTNESS — Melissa Klein (right) struggles to maintain her composure as she and husband Aaron answer questions about the loss of their bakery and the \$135,000 state government-imposed fine against them for declining to bake a cake for a same sex wedding. (Special photo)

we neither have freedom of religion or freedom of speech. We will NOT give up this fight, and we will NOT be silenced."

Their lawyer, Anna Harmon, said in a written statement Avakian's order "has made this case about an overpowered elected official using his position to root out thought and speech with which he personally disagrees." The Portland Oregonian reported.

In a July 11 Facebook post, the Kleins, who have five children, quoted Jesus' words in Matt. 5:11: "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me."

An administrative law judge ruled in January the Kleins violated an Oregon law that protects civil rights based on sexual orientation. In April, the judge,

Alan McCullough, proposed damages of \$135,000.

Avakian's July 2 order finalized the compensation to the lesbian couple for "emotional, mental and physical suffering," and ordered the Kleins to "cease and desist from denying the full and equal accommodations, advantages, facilities and privileges" of their business to any person on account of his or her sexual orientation.

On April 15, 1912, the largest and, many say, one of the most luxurious passenger ships ever built went down in the sea in the North Atlantic. Almost 90 years before our generation experienced 9/11, a horrible tragedy was reported around the world and shook the hearts of people across every continent. They said it was unsinkable but making that voyage from England to New York, it went down and there, until this day, remains at the bottom of the sea. The number of people killed in that tragedy is not exact but ranges somewhere around 1,500-1,600 men, women, and children. For years, people have speculated and tried to discover what happened that night of April 14 that caused the ship to go down the following day.

In recent years, scientists with cameras that can be lowered to the sea floor have repeatedly examined pieces of the ship and, while there still may be things to be discovered, this they know: On that cold April night the ship struck an iceberg which made huge gashes in the hull of the Titanic. Those open gashes allowed the near-freezing waters of the Atlantic to pour in and within hours engulf the ship and pull it to the ocean floor. While some of the survivors say that there were people who were trying to keep calm on the ship and reassure everyone that this was the unsinkable Titanic and all would be fine, in other parts of the ship there were both crew and passengers who were in panic mode simply from instinctively realizing this was not good.

In our day, we have watched what seems to be new gashes in the hull of the mighty ship known as the United States of America. In fact, over the years of many of us — our lifetimes — we have watched enormous gashes in the ship of state. Just think about it, for over the past few decades we have watched decisions through the courts and other means that have removed prayer of any type from our schools. We have watched as God and any influence He may have in our history was removed from teachings for our children. We have seen the law of the land allow babies to be removed from their mother's womb, never to take a breath. Recently we have watched as the highest court in the land by a 5-4 decision redefined marriage.

The latest ruling that now is called the law of the land was not a decision made about legislation but about definition that



The Sinking of a Great Ship

changed the biblical picture of marriage into a new social definition of marriage from one man and one woman to a person and a person. In the clear teachings of the Word of God beginning in the opening pages of Genesis, the Scripture says that God made them male and female and then in the garden God presented a woman to a man so that their lives would be fulfilled and their futures would be bright as they would be blessed with each other and populate the land.

The Supreme Court decision not only was a change in America but a change from every culture and every religious teaching — even beyond those who hold to the Bible as the Word of God. Sounds of ecstasy and agony were heard all across the land when the ruling came down. Another huge gash ripped the fabric of American society, and the hull of the great ship was damaged. Now, most of these decisions over the years have supposedly been made to ensure freedom and civil rights for people. The right of a mother to choose whether or not she wants that baby to be born. The right of other religions to be respected so nobody gets to pray. The right of a man who loves a man or a woman who loves a woman to have their union described as a marriage under the banner of marriage equality.

What has in cultures around the world been a foundational piece of society and the civil relationship of marriage, how it takes place, and how it can even be undone by divorce, now has no parameters and obviously will be battle-fought in the courts and probably again before the Supreme

Court in decades to come because of the open-ended interpretation of marriage. Within one week after the ruling there were applications being made and people discussing how to go about getting a marriage license to include a polygamous second wife. They supposedly love each other and so now a man who has a wife wants a right to another wife.

Then there are the discussions of group marriages — for example, two men and two women or four men and four women. For those who say in astonishment, "Well, that would never happen," take a short step back ten and especially twenty years ago when virtually all of us would have said what happened a few days ago before the courts would never happen, but it did.

What are we supposed to do? All is not lost and while there are gashes in the hull of this great American ship, you and I can be a part of the rescue to keep her afloat. While there are many things that can be done, let me just suggest three:

One — Return to God. Let God work in your life individually. What God wants to do in homes needs to be brought into the laboratory of your own life, to let Him work with you and your mate and your family. If the passion and outrage against the court decision were to be turned into spiritual fervor to follow God and let Christ be the center of our lives and our homes, what an incredible difference that can make.

Two — Reestablish the biblical home. I mean by that to help day-by-day create an atmosphere of love and care for you and your companion and you and

your offspring. Help keep your children focused toward the will, plan, and purpose of God in their lives. Don't just use all of your energy to get them on the best sports team or push them in some specific academic pursuit. All of these things come under the governance of God as our Leader and our Savior.

Three — Resist hate. Do not be caught up in a web of hate against people who may not share our values. Don't be on a tirade of hate and exclusion of people from your church or fellowship. We seldom do that with any other group of sinners. We welcome sinners to come to the house of God and hear the Good News from heaven; that our sins can be forgiven and life can be different in Christ. If you're going to exclude a specific group or a specific sin, think about that in terms of the sinners we already allow in to our churches. Do you welcome people in your church who may be struggling with some addiction? Do you have anybody come and worship where you go to church who may have had an affair and damaged their home? Do you let people come in who have been convicted of some crime, or do you allow people to come and worship in your church who may have, during the week gone by, used God's name in vain or cheated on a business deal or had a bad attitude or maybe ignored the teaching of Scripture that we are supposed to tithe? Most of those folks get a free pass and beyond that, we even love them.

After the Supreme Court announcement was made, there were rainbow banners that went up from the White House down to local celebrations that said "Love wins." Well, I'm not sure if that ruling is a true expression of love winning and time will tell what it means for a society, but I can tell you this for sure: There are those of us who know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and gather together to share His Good News that there is hope in the midst of despair and there is love that comes from heaven itself that can make a difference in everyone's life. It is a different kind of love. It is a John 3:16, Jesus-on-the-cross-for-us, and us-loving-others-in-His-name, kind of love. It is not an easy love, but it is a genuine, life-changing, eternity-changing love. He has put us here to preach it, teach it, express it, and be the embodiment of His love at work.

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

BIBL iO C i P H E R

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NBFLBR ZIAIGWIL SGX: EYZ MSIR TIZI

FBB TFGMGCN EYZ SGX

BOVI IGNSM: EYZMR

Clue: R = Y

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Mark 3:29

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005

Truth is not relative.

Find it in the One who is the way, truth, and life.

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

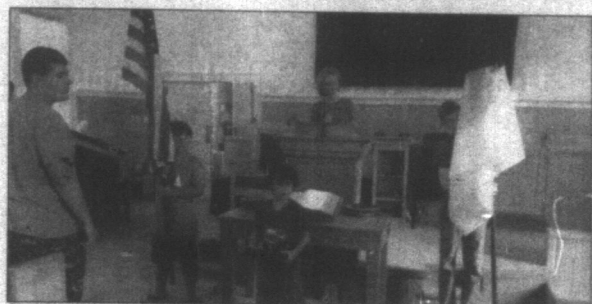
1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life.

From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

Vacation Bible School



UNION HALL CHURCH, BROOKHAVEN.



RIVERPORT CHURCH, GREENVILLE: Neal Cordell, pastor.



THOMASTOWN CHURCH, THOMASTOWN: VBS, July 13 - 15 with commencement July 16; average attendance, 26; offerings to Baptist Children's Village; Misty Moore, director.



WASHINGTON CHURCH, NATCHEZ: July 6 - 10; total enrollment, 61.

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New retirees find their place teaching Bible in South Asia

SOUTH ASIA (BP) - Kathy (not her real name) didn't know being able to drive a stick-shift vehicle would introduce her to the man with whom she'd serve a decade overseas, fight cancer, and, come retirement, help disciple local believers in Asia.

It all started when players at a Baptist Student Union (BSU) flag football game asked Kathy and her friends if they would get more water for the team. "You can take my car," said Michael Hudson (not his real name), the BSU president.

"I was the only girl among those five or six of us who could drive stick," said Kathy, then a junior-year transfer to the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, who drove the car and met her future husband during her first week on campus.

They served 10 years with the International Mission Board (IMB) in the Philippines where, among other things, they managed a bookstore. Michael subsequently spent 21 years with LifeWay Christian Resources in Nashville in human resources.

"We love to teach," Kathy said of their passion for leading Sunday School classes for adults and youth - a passion, coupled with a lifelong commitment to missions, that has stirred these new retirees to lead training courses in South Asia.

Asia was "one of the last places I wanted to go," Michael said. It wasn't high on Kathy's list either. "A lot of people have stereotypes about what it would be like to go to a foreign country. We had a stereotype about South Asia," she said.

"It was not anything at all like we were expecting. We found out we loved these people very much," she said of local pastors and church leaders who lack access to seminary studies yet start hundreds of churches some years.

With new churches comes the need to disciple not only new believers, but also their leaders. Yet there aren't enough international Christian workers to train everyone, so that's where the 69-year-old Hudsons come in.

For the past several years since Michael retired from LifeWay, the Hudsons have volunteered two or three months each year in South Asia helping train church leaders who serve among large Sikh, Buddhist, and Hindu populations.

"We are going to learn how to study the Bible for ourselves," Michael tells a group of pastors and leaders gathered earlier this year for three



BREATHING IT IN - Michael and Kathy Hudson (not their real names) enthusiastically join in a worship service with young pastors and their families in South Asia at the outset of three days of training in teaching the Bible that they will lead. (BP photo courtesy of IMB)



LEARNING TO TEACH - Michael Hudson (not his real name) trains young leaders to tell Bible stories, underscoring the importance and responsibility of learning so that they can teach and tell others. (BP photo courtesy of IMB)

days of training. "As leaders, you have the responsibility both to train others and continue learning yourselves. Only if we teach others can we grow in the Kingdom."

Just a year before retiring Michael led his second volunteer trip with LifeWay to South Asia, pushing the Hudsons from, "We never wanted to come here," to asking, "How can we serve here when we retire?"

Michael and Kathy certainly weren't expecting they'd be asked by to help train leaders. "I've had a little Bible training," Michael told IMB personnel, "but I'm not a Bible scholar."

No problem, they said. "You may be a businessman," he was told, "but you've taught Sunday School all your life."

Turns out Michael and Kathy were just the people needed to help develop and

teach a series of six three-day courses on foundations for teaching the Bible. They've also trained volunteer teams from U.S. churches who came to South Asia to teach.

During the months they're in South Asia they miss grandkids for sure, but serving after retirement does have benefits. "You have more experience. You have a perspective on life you don't have when you're young," Michael said.

For the Hudsons, perspective also came when Kathy was diagnosed with cancer about 11 years ago. When God healed her, she saw life's brevity more clearly.

"You need to be bold sometimes in the things you want to do and the things God is leading you to do," Kathy said of their ventures to Asia. "You see the value to teaching. It's something that will last beyond yourself."

Pakistani Christian mother's execution stalled by high court

LAHORE, Pakistan (BP) — Pakistan's Supreme Court on July 22 agreed to review the case of a Christian mother sentenced to death on a blasphemy charge, temporarily suspending her execution.

Aasiya Noreen, commonly known as Asia Bibi, is the first woman to be sentenced to death for blasphemy in Pakistan. The three-judge bench of the Supreme Court at the Lahore Registry admitted for hearing her petition challenging the sentence.

Attorney Saif-ul-Malook told Morning Star News that he had a strong case for demanding Noreen's acquittal.

"Asia Bibi has claimed that she had not made any blasphemous remarks, and that rather her fellow villagers had leveled the allegation against her based on a personal feud," Malook said. "The FIR [First Information Report] against my client was registered five days after the alleged incident had taken place. The mala fide intent is quite visible as the prolonged delay in lodging the case implies that the complainants had plenty of time to cook up the allegations against Asia Bibi."

Malook said that in a previous blasphemy case, Ayub Masih v. State in 2002, judges had thrown out the death sentence against Masih due to a three-hour delay in the registration of the FIR. Attorney Naem Shakir made the same contention before the Lahore High Court in October last year — that the main complainant, local Muslim cleric Muhammad Salaam, had not heard Noreen blaspheme, and that his original FIR had been filed five days after the women's quarrel.

Shakir had argued in his appeal that during the trial the only reason given for this delay was "deliberation and consultation," and said that cleric Salaam had acknowledged this in court.

Salaam, the main accuser, had told the high court that the FIR got delayed because he had investigated the charges himself first, Malook said. Salaam has said on record that his religious obligation to defend the dignity of Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, was the basis for his decision to be a court witness. He said he had only heard Noreen allegedly confess to blasphemy when she had been brought before a Panchayat (local village council) several days after the quarrel.

Noreen's other main accuser, the owner of the field where she worked, Muhammad Imran, was not present at the time of the quarrel either; he was away from the village at the time.

Arrested in June 2009 after Muslim co-workers in a berry field 60 miles west of Lahore

beat her when she refused to convert to Islam following a quarrel, her death sentence was announced in November 2010.

The Lahore High Court on Oct. 16, 2014 upheld the death sentence for the mother of two children and stepmother to three others.

Noreen, 50, was convicted under Section 295-C of the defamation statutes for alleged derogatory comments about Muhammad, which is punishable by death.

The Supreme Court judges today said they would fix a date in due course to review the substance of the appeal.

Chaudhry Ghulam Mustafa, lawyer for the complainant against Noreen, opposed the petition on grounds that it had

been filed too late. But Justice Saqib Nisar, head of the three-judge bench, said the court would hear the case.

Malook, who is representing Noreen before the high court, said her chances for acquittal were good.

"I believe that Asia Bibi's case was not handled properly, but even now she has a good chance of being freed from her ordeal on the basis of inadmissible evidence," Malook said. "We have a good case, and I'm sure the Supreme Court will consider the shoddy trial Asia Bibi has been subjected to and deliver justice to her."

Morning Star News is a California-based independent news service focusing on the persecution of Christians worldwide. Used by permission.



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Just for the Record



FIRST CHURCH, QUITMAN, recently took a group to Tegucigalpa, Honduras, on a mission trip. The group took food to the hungry, led a community children's event, worked on light construction projects, conducted discipleship classes for children and youth, and led in two worship services. Gene Neal, pastor.



The RAs of **FIRST CHURCH, MORTON**, attended RA camp June 20-24 at Central Hills Baptist Retreat.



NEW HOPE CHURCH, WALNUT GROVE, held a baby dedication June 14. Shown are the participants.



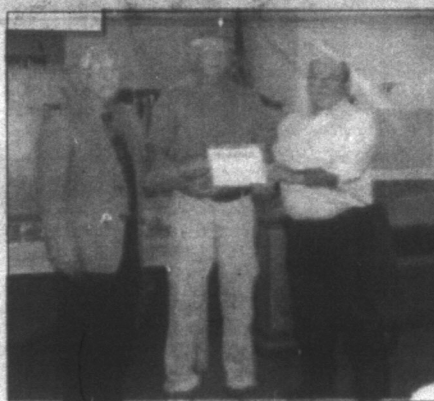
The younger youth of **FIRST CHURCH, TREMONT**, went to camp recently.



JOURNEY COMMUNITY CHURCH, LUCE-DALE, launched Apr. 20. The church meets in the Flex Gym and reaches many un-churched families in the area. There are student groups and children's groups meeting on Wednesdays, and the church has launched other groups.

In other Church News:

► The Magnolia Boys Quartet will be in concert at **Magnolia Church, Laurel**, Aug. 1, 6 p.m. Love offering.



NEW HOPE CHURCH, MYRTLE, ordained Bob Chism as deacon July 12. Shown are Bobby Cossey, Chism, and Joe Kizer.



PINEVIEW CHURCH, LAUREL, held baptism services June 21. Shown are pastor Tim Nelson, Hugh Schwan, Tori Kelly, Dalton Page, and Kayden Waller.

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LOCKE STATION CHURCH, PANOLA ASSOCIATION, recently held a GA/RA/Mission Friends recognition. Shown are current and former GAs and current and former missions leaders. Rusty Miller, pastor.

GuideStone to appeal mandate to Supreme Court

DALLAS (BP) — GuideStone Financial Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention has filed an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court against the government's contraceptive mandate that will require certain ministries served by GuideStone to provide abortion-causing drugs and devices in their employer health plans — or risk crippling fines.

GuideStone, along with churches and integrated auxiliaries of churches, are exempt from the mandate and not at risk of penalties. For certain religious employers other than churches and their integrated auxiliaries, however, the government has argued that it offers an "accommodation" to religious employers who object to the mandate.

Harold R. Loftin Jr., GuideStone general counsel, said the Southern Baptist entity "has, from the filing of our case, objected to the so-called 'accommodation' because the government is attempting to rewrite the terms of GuideStone's plan" to use the plan "to provide access to drugs and devices GuideStone believes to be impermissible. In addition, the government's regulations attempt to require certain of GuideStone's religious employers to take actions that facilitate the delivery of abortion-inducing drugs and devices to our participants and their dependents."

Loftin noted that the evidence presented in court "showed that women, as young as age 10, will be notified of their eligibility to receive abortion-inducing drugs and devices for free by GuideStone's third-party administrator, if the religious employer complies with the government's demands. If the employer refuses, then it will be subject to crippling penalties for its refusal."

A three-judge panel of the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Denver on July 14 overruled an injunction in place since December 2013 that prohibited the government from enforcing its mandate on affected ministries served by GuideStone. As part of the appeal to the Supreme Court, GuideStone will ask the

Denver court to maintain the injunction until the appeal has been decided.

"GuideStone, as an historic board of the Southern Baptist Convention, was never at risk of these draconian penalties," GuideStone President O.S.

Hawkins said. "However, as defenders of both religious liberty and the sanctity of life, we could not permit the government to effectively alter our plan documents and plan design with these affected ministries to make available abortion-causing drugs against our religious beliefs."

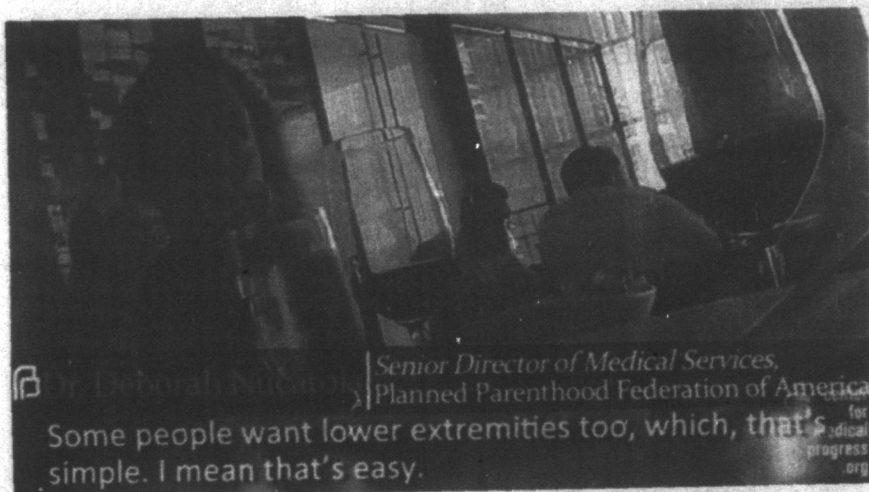
"If the courts have already seen fit to allow closely held, for-profit corporations like Hobby Lobby to avoid the mandate and the associated penalties, it boggles the mind that the 10th Circuit Court wouldn't also exempt nonprofit religious organizations that object," Hawkins said.

GuideStone officials said they are optimistic that the Supreme Court will accept its appeal by the end of September.

GuideStone, along with co-plaintiffs Truett-McConnell College, a Georgia Baptist Convention institution, and Reaching Souls International, an Oklahoma-based mission-sending organization, are represented by leading religious liberty attorneys who also represent a similar case that has received extensive publicity: the Little Sisters of the Poor, a Roman Catholic organization that also is among those appealing to the Supreme Court.

"The government has lost every single time they have made these arguments before the Supreme Court — including last year's landmark Hobby Lobby case. One would think they would get the message and stop bullying ministries like Reaching Souls and Truett-McConnell College," said Mark Rienzi, senior counsel of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty and lead attorney for GuideStone, Reaching Souls, and Truett-McConnell.

Regardless of the outcome before the Supreme Court, Hawkins said GuideStone remains committed to the scores of ministries potentially affected by the mandate if the Supreme Court upholds it.



Senior Director of Medical Services,
Planned Parenthood Federation of America

Some people want lower extremities too, which, that's simple. I mean that's easy.

News veterans slam recent Planned Parenthood reportage

NASHVILLE (BP and local reports) — The mainstream news media's coverage of two undercover videos showing Planned Parenthood executives discussing the crushing of babies to be aborted and the subsequent sale of their body parts been criticized by some Christians as minimal and slanted.

"The media's political correctness is standing in the way of what should be a moral outrage," said Calvin Wittman, a Colorado pastor and former television news anchor.

Wittman, pastor of Applewood Church in the Denver area told Baptist Press media bias is exhibited both in whether outlets cover a story and how they cover it. While the media has covered the Planned Parenthood controversy, he said, "their spin is clearly visible in their reporting."

Deborah Nucatola, a physician and senior director of medical services for Planned Parenthood Federation of America, was caught on undercover video discussing the sale of organs and tissues removed from aborted children, and how an abortion can be manipulated to kill the baby while preserving the body parts.

A second Planned Parenthood physician has since been exposed on undercover video discussing the same process.

All journalists reported based on their worldviews, Wittman said, but much of the reporting about Planned Parenthood evidences a secular agenda. He cited the emphasis of some media outlets that Planned Parenthood allegedly did not sell baby parts for profit as a case in point.

"Is it okay to own slaves as long as you don't do it for profit?" Wittman asked. "Is it okay to wave the Confederate flag if you don't do it for profit? Are there things that are morally

wrong, irrespective of whether or not you make a profit off them? The media is inconsistent in that."

A July 21 News Busters article criticized the three national broadcast television news programs for devoting only nine minutes and 11 seconds to coverage of the Planned Parenthood videos the week of the first video release, with ABC giving just 46 seconds to the story. News Busters contrasted that with 31 minutes and 11 seconds spent on Planned Parenthood by ABC, CBS, and NBC in 2012 during the week Susan G. Komen temporarily stopped funding America's largest abortion provider.

News Busters added that all three networks "censored the word 'baby' from their coverage of the videos 'and instead used the term 'fetal tissue.' Similarly, from the beginning of their coverage, ABC, NBC, and CBS labeled the makers of the videos as 'anti-abortion activists' rather than use the 'pro-life' label."

Roger Alford, communications director for the Kentucky Baptist Convention and a former Associated Press correspondent, told BP the mainstream media has taken "a wide variety of approaches to this coverage."

Alford noted the contrast between a pro-life USA Today op-ed by Kirsten Powers calling the videos "stomach-turning" and "damning," and a New York Times editorial criticizing the Center for Medical Progress's undercover video campaign as "a dishonest attempt to make legal, voluntary, and potentially lifesaving tissue donations appear nefarious and illegal."

Television networks, Alford said, face a dilemma related to graphic descriptions of abortion used in the videos.

"The content is beyond disturbing," Alford said. "The dismemberment of unborn babies isn't a subject most Americans can tolerate while downing a quick bowl of corn flakes in the morning." The networks' decision "to describe the videos rather than show them speaks to the horror of the content," he said.

The Federalist's Mollie Hemingway published a July 16 article titled, "The Bad, Worse, & Ugly: Media Coverage of Planned Parenthood's Organ Harvesting Scandal," in which she criticized major media outlets for being slow to report on the first video and biased in their coverage.

"The video immediately lit up social media" upon its publication at 8 a.m. Eastern Time July 14, Hemingway wrote. "Unlike most significant stories about major hot-button social issues, however, no major media reported on the news until 4:30 p.m. that afternoon. Some are still working on (or working on hiding) their coverage of the story."

Hemingway acknowledged initial reports by the Washington Post and CNN were "fair," but she critiqued a litany of media outlets, including the Post, for slanting their stories toward Planned Parenthood.

Terry Mattingly, a Christian journalist who blogs about the media's coverage of religion, said The Times has incorrectly claimed in multiple articles that the Center for Medical Progress released the full version of its initial video after Planned Parenthood complained of misleading editing.

In reality, the full version was released 21 seconds after the edited version, Mattingly noted.

Hemingway has requested corrections by The Times at least twice to no avail, Mattingly wrote at the Get Religion blog.



HAWKINS



LOFTIN



RIENZI

DEAL

cont. from p. 1

an envoy sent by the Sultan of Oman, the U.S. eventually agreed to help secure the release of four Iranians held in the U.S. and U.K.

Two of the Iranians, convicted of arms smuggling, were a retired senior diplomat and a scientist alleged to have played an important role in Iran's missile and nuclear programs. All four were released in 2012-13. In at least two cases, the released Iranian prisoners had already served their full sentences but were allowed to depart the U.S. more quickly than typical released detainees, The Journal reported.

According to some Journal sources, release of the Iranian prisoners likely was a reciprocal gesture for Iran's release of three American hikers who were arrested in 2009 on espionage charges after they apparently wandered into Iran from Iraq.

The release of the Iranians also served a larger purpose of building goodwill leading up to nuclear talks, according to The Journal. "The return of prisoners on both sides seemed to help build momentum for the secret nuclear negotiations

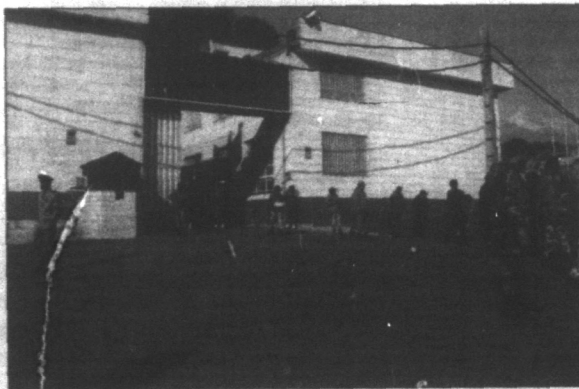
taking place in Oman," The Journal stated.

While the first three released Iranians seemed to be a response for Iran's release of the hikers, intelligence analyst Ronen Solomon told The Times of Israel it was "unclear... what the U.S. got" in exchange for the fourth prisoner — nuclear scientist Mojtaba Atarodi, an electrical engineer arrested in 2011 in Los Angeles on classified charges.

Atarodi's release, Solomon said, was "a prize" for Iran because of his apparent role in the nation's nuclear and missile programs. Neither side acknowledges that formal prisoner swaps have ever occurred, according to The Journal, but Solomon speculated in 2013 that Iran would release at least one American in custody as a reciprocal gesture.

They never did. Obama said July 21 that his administration is "not going to relent until we bring home Americans who are unjustly detained in Iran," Fox News reported. He named Abedini, Rezaian, and Hekmati as individuals who "should be released," adding that Iran should help find Levinson.

Obama appeared to take offense July 15 when CBS reporter Major Garrett asked why



PLACE OF BRUTALITY — The sign over the main entrance reads, "Evin House of Detention," but the prison in the Iranian capital city of Tehran is known worldwide for its mistreatment of political and religious prisoners. It is believed that American pastor Saeed Abedini has spent much of his time in the country's infamous prison system at Evin. (Photo courtesy of Creative Commons CC BY-SA 2.0)

the president was "content" to leave the four Americans out of the nuclear deal, the Washington Post reported. Obama responded, "The notion that I am 'content' as I celebrate with American citizens languishing in Iranian jails [is] nonsense."

Conditioning a nuclear deal on the Americans' release,

Obama said, could cause Iran to reason, "Maybe we can get additional concessions out of the Americans by holding these individuals."

Wolf called Obama's argument "ridiculous," saying the U.S. used to place human rights "at the very top of every bit of negotiation."

Jordan Sekulow, executive director of the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), told BP, "The U.S. really pulled out all the stops to get Iran to sit down at the [negotiating] table" while failing to fight adequately for its own citizens.

Though advocacy groups like the ACLJ are not in a position to decide whether prisoner swaps should occur, Sekulow cited an apparent incongruity between the three hikers released by Iran and the prisoners released by the U.S.

"Anytime there's a release of Iranians, they're likely imprisoned in the U.S. because of their work funding Iran's terrorist activities or their nuclear program," Sekulow said. The detained Americans in Iran "are prisoners of conscience," he added.

A final deal must not be approved by Obama and Congress without securing the release of the detained Americans, Sekulow said.

"It would be unacceptable not to get these Americans home," Sekulow said, noting that Congress has begun its 60-day review period of the nuclear agreement. "What would the incentive be" to release them if Iran received "the sanctions relief they're looking for?" Sekulow pointed out.

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Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. **Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted.** Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

LIFEWAY

cont. from p. 1

already started engineering and environmental studies on the property, Rainer said, and he anticipates that, if all goes well, closing on the new location early this fall.

LifeWay plans to break ground this year on the new facility that is slated for completion by late 2017.

LifeWay began a preliminary feasibility study last August into selling its campus to relocate to facilities better suited to the ministry's future. Much of LifeWay's current campus is outdated, Rainer had said, noting that many of the buildings date from the early part of the 20th century and are not designed for modern technology or collaborative work.

About 1,100 LifeWay employees are based in the downtown offices and will move into the new building.

LifeWay, with more than 4,000 total employees, operates 184 LifeWay Christian Stores in 29 states, and a national conference center in Ridgeway, N.C.

LifeWay has contracted with Gresham, Smith and Partners in Nashville to design the new building, with Bell & Associates Construction in Brentwood, Tenn., managing construction of the new building. Compass Partners, LLC, in Brentwood will help LifeWay manage the process of the new project, serving as the owner's representative.

LifeWay was founded in 1891 in Nashville as the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

THE VILLAGE VIEW



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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

MAY 2015

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Mr. Hiram Williams III
Mrs. Syble B. Lee
Martin "Slick" Willingham
Mr. Charles W. Holmes
Rev. Jerry G. Wise
Mrs. Edwina M. Wise

North Columbia BC
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Dr. & Mrs. Victor L. Walsh
Mr. Leslie Pinnix
Mr. & Mrs. Tommy Pinnix
William Harold Polk
Mrs. Brooke Polk Johnson
Amy D. Pritchett
Rev. & Mrs. William B. Webb
Upper Room SSC
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Kelly Wilson
Mrs. Billie Lynn Arthur

JUNE 2015

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Mr. & Mrs. Sammy Hearn
Mrs. Mary L. Turner
Pam May
Ms. Ernestine F. May
Dorothy McCammon
Turkey Creek BC
Mondall Miller
Adult III SSC,

JUNE 2015

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Sidney Adams
Mrs. Glenda C. Fry
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Mr. & Mrs. Gerald Sanders
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Bill Butler
Mr. & Mrs. Pete Robbins
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Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Jenkins
Mr. Hiram Carlock
Mr. & Mrs. Gregg T. Tindle
Cory Carwyle
Concord BC
Mrs. Jessie Chance
Jim & Pat Callender
Mr. & Mrs. James H. Riley
Mr. & Mrs. Jimmie L. Manton
James (Babba) Chatham
Mr. & Mrs. Paul Roberts, Jr.
Judy Clark
Providence BC
Mrs. Doris Clett
Pheba BC
Mrs. Cathey Collins
Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Jenkins
Mary Jannie Coward
Branch BC
Mr. James Ollen Crosby
Mr. & Mrs. Cletos T. Goza
Mr. & Mrs. Joe Maggio
Ophelia Smith SSC,
New Prospect BC
Mr. Danny Daniels
Mr. & Mrs. Danny E. Hamilton
Mrs. Syble B. Lee
Mr. Danny Earl Daves
Cheryl Mobley
James Merritt
Mr. & Mrs. Bill Harris
Ms. Carole Kelly
Ms. Lavonne Ervin
Mr. & Mrs. Bobby W. Dye
Ms. Barbara A. Griffin
Mitch Deaver
Mr. & Mrs. Daniel A. Smith
Mr. Jerome Dew
Dr. & Mrs. Victor L. Walsh
W. E. (Sonny) Diggs Jr.
Mr. & Mrs. Ricky Pullen
Mr. Garvease Dillon
Dr. & Mrs. Milton York
Mike, Janis & Ben Goff
Mr. & Mrs. Ernest G. Thomas
Mr. & Mrs. Ernest Parker
Mr. & Mrs. Gregg T. Tindle
Mr. & Mrs. Keith Matthews
Mr. & Mrs. Percy J. Peeler
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas C. Hill
Mr. & Mrs. Turner A. Brown
Mr. James E. Parker, Jr.
Mrs. Debra Isaac
Foam Packaging, Inc.
Patty & Beth Sullender
Marybella Dukes
Mr. & Mrs. Jim Apperson
Mr. Melvin Dye
Dr. & Mrs. Victor L. Walsh
Thelma Elmore
Mr. & Mrs. Warren Strickland

Shirley Fairburn
Mr. & Mrs. Jim Forbes
Clem Farr
Marilyn Plunkett
Charles Riggs Ferguson Sr.

Mr. & Mrs. Jennings Dixon
Mrs. Barbara Fowler
Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Jenkins
Ann Marie Freeman
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Paczak

Mr. Jerry D. Mowdy
Mrs. Marcia Garner
Mrs. Mary C. Rives
Mrs. Margie Fulgham
Patricia & Annie Pearl Triplett

INTAKE AND OUTREACH SPECIALIST OPENING

The BCV has an immediate opening for an individual to fill the position of Intake and Outreach Specialist in its central office in Ridgeland, MS. The individual filling this position must be a mature, Christian adult, with personal integrity, Christian character and sound reputation. This individual must have a demonstrated commitment to the ethical standards incumbent upon each staff member of the BCV staff and an appreciation of the confidentiality extended to children and families served by the BCV. The successful candidate for this position must have a bachelor's degree in a behavioral or social science field and a demonstrated ability to cultivate adaptive relationships with both children and adults. This individual must also have the ability to effectively communicate, through both written and spoken language, exhibit sound judgment, tact and assertiveness. This person must be able to work effectively with referral sources, agency clients and their families, and BCV staff. As this position requires working both at the central office, and traveling across the state to conduct intake interviews and to meet with potential referral sources, successful candidates for this position must have a relatively flexible schedule and be able to travel accordingly. However, no overnight travel is expected.

To apply for Intake and Outreach Specialist position, download an application at www.baptistchildrensvillage.com and send it, along with a statement of faith and a resume to Kristen Slaven at kslaven@baptistchildrensvillage.com or mail to The Baptist Children's Village C/O Kristen Slaven at 114 Marketridge Drive, Ridgeland, MS 39157.

BCV EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

The BCV employs Christian, mission-minded, husband and wife teams, without dependent children or pets, to serve in the position of Houseparents. The couples must be mature Christian adults with personal integrity, character and of good reputation with standards and ethics expected of any member of The Baptist Children's Village staff.

They receive a salary with benefits and are provided a private bedroom and meals while on duty. The primary job responsibility of Houseparents is to maintain a home-like environment that models healthy, Christian family living for children and youth residents. They are the primary caregivers and help with everything from transportation and homework to laundry and meals when on duty.

Houseparent responsibilities are varied and somewhat dependent upon which campus and to which cottage the couple is assigned. However, all Houseparents need to be in good physical, mental and emotional health. They must be cooperative and comfortable working in a team environment.

To apply for the current Houseparent openings, please contact Celeste Cade at ccade@baptistchildrensvillage.com or 601-922-2242.

A complete job description and application may be downloaded at www.baptistchildrensvillage.com.

Glimpse of the Throne • Revelation 4:1-11

Are you proficient at riddles, brain teasers or mind benders? Let's see if you can figure this one out: A cowboy rides into town on Friday, stays three days and leaves on Friday. How is this possible? It is possible because the name of his horse is Friday. Here is another one for you: Name an activity that requires the use of all 5 senses. Think you know the right response? I will reveal the correct answer in a moment.

We will camp out this week in Revelation 4. Chapter 4 is one of the shortest chapters in Revelation and can easily be read in one sitting. It is a chapter that utilizes our God-given senses. With so many assorted themes in Revelation, add this one in your study time. Go through the Book of Revelation and underline or note each time God employs the senses of John while writing. On many occasions John writes about the things he heard, saw and experienced.

Revelation 1:12-17 was John's introduction to the vividness of this Revelation of Jesus Christ. The things John witnessed and experienced were greater than anything he could have imagined. Many times his only response was to fall on his knees in awe and worship. Although not a much-talked about theme in the Book, it would do us all good to remember humility in the presence of God.

Revelation 4 is a tremendous blessing because of what it says about God and what He allows us to see. It never ceases to amaze me the money and time some Christians spend on books and movies with the repeated premise of the reality of both God and Heaven. There will never be a book, movie or account as powerful and as authentic as the Book of Revelation. Some are more content with a movie or story than the actual Scripture. There is enough in the Bible to not only satisfy us, but to transform and amaze us as well.

This is where Revelation 4 is helpful. Believers desperately wish to know that Heaven is real and that God is on His throne. These facts give us assurance of His victory over His enemies and assures us of our eternity with Him. Knowing that one day God will reign supreme should give us a fresh perspective on our world. So many Christians continually fret about the condition of

the world, they forget we are only here for a brief time. That does not mean we are to be passive and unconcerned, but it does us well to remember that we are not home yet. 100 years from now the absolutely only thing that will matter is your response to Christ and the salvation He offered.

I am sure John could have become discouraged while on Patmos and God gave him a glimpse of what was to come.

The great thing about the glimpses of God, they are more than sufficient to encourage us to persevere and stay faithful to Him.

A glimpse of the glory of God allows us to see the world from Heaven's perspective and that changes everything! The first thing John sees as recorded in Revelation 4 was an open door in Heaven. It was opened for him and invited to come in. What a beautiful picture of the grace of God. The centerpiece of John's vision was a throne.



Explore the Bible
with Bobby McKay

The throne reminded John, the original audience and us today of the glory and majesty of the Lord. The beautiful colors and jewels were the only way he could describe God's appearance. John then saw 24 other thrones that surrounded the central throne. This is one of many sections that have been subject to numerous interpretations. The 24 most likely is indicative of the 12 sons of Israel and the 12 apostles of Christ. In Revelation 4:5,6 John's attention is shifted to the central throne again. Lightning, thunder, fiery torches and something appearing like a sea of crystal are all images John recorded. How might those visuals reflect God's glory and at the same time, encourage you today?

He closes the chapter with praise and worship. When a believer encounters the holiness of God worship will follow. A glimpse of God is all we need to be transformed. I mentioned a riddle earlier about the senses. The answer is our life with God. We hear His voice, we can taste and see He is good, our worship is a pleasing aroma to Him, we see those around us that need lifting up, and He touches our heart and mind with His love. Believing and following God makes sense; all five of them!

McKay is pastor of Harperville Church, Harperville.

Return to Prayer • Nehemiah 1

Recently, Lifeway Research conducted a survey about prayer. The findings were interesting: When Americans prayed, 82% of them prayed for family or friends; 74% of those prayers included praying for themselves; but only 42% of the people surveyed included any prayers asking for forgiveness from sin. About half of Americans (48 percent) say they pray at least every day, while a third (31 percent) say they pray several times a day. Overall, about two-thirds (65 percent) of Americans say they pray at least once a month (lifewayresearch.com October 1, 2014). Nehemiah shows us the perfect model for prayer and seeking God through fasting during a heart-breaking and difficult time.

Around one thousand years after Moses and about 400 years before the birth of Christ, the scripture tells us that Nehemiah asked some people who had returned from Jerusalem about the state of the city. It is easy to see how Nehemiah's desire to live for God results in an ongoing concern for others. Because he lived in the Shushan, the fortified palace and was an important servant in the King of Persia's household, he was probably a busy and important person. Our scripture today shows his compassion and desire to see how the Jews were doing.

The men answer his question with dire news. The remnant of the people was in distress and great trouble! The gates and the walls were torn down.

Reaction: Nehemiah reacts quickly, in verse 4, "When I heard these words, I sat down and wept. I mourned for a number of days, fasting and praying before the God of heaven." Many scholars believe that Nehemiah prayed for four months before taking action to do something. He let his sadness and mourning compel him to pray and seek God. Many times we do not want to pray because we believe that we can fix problems in our own strength.

Repentance: No doubt that Nehemiah's time with the Lord in fasting and prayer had God's purposes all over it. God used that time to place in Nehemiah's heart a desire for repentance. Nehemiah acknowledges that he and his Father's house had sinned. He acted humble and

identified with the needy. He prayed using "we" instead of "they".

Remember: After confessing sin, Nehemiah takes time to ask God to "remember" the promises He had made. This is an awesome way to come to God-praying back to Him the promises He had made to Moses. God had not forgotten His promises to Moses but this verbalization of that promise helped Nehemiah to position his prayer. Remember those bumper stickers that said, "God said it. I believe it? Nehemiah's repeat of God's previous promises was the opportunity to verbalize his faith. The promise he reminded God about was a conditional one. If the people return to Him...then He will show mercy and gather the exiles together in safety. Nehemiah displays great faith by reminding God of His previous commitments.

Walk: Have you spent time in confession lately? What promises of God can you pray back to Him in faith? Have difficult situa-

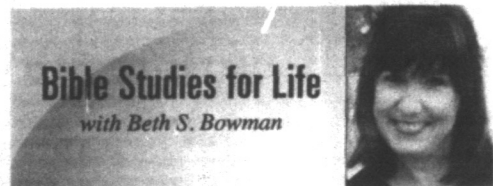
tions caused you to act in your own power or the power of God through prayer?

Run: Spend some extended time in prayer and fasting. Take significant time out of your life to seek God and worship Him. Ask Him to reveal sin in your life that has crept in.

Soar: Stop and take a look at the suffering of the world. Are there Christian brothers and sisters who are being persecuted for their faith? When will you stop your busy life long enough to pray for them?

My most precious moments with Jesus have not come during the easy times of my life. My fellowship with him has not deepened on the brightest of days but rather, those times in which I have been heart-broken, sad and discouraged. It is during those times that I have had a small glimpse into His perfect mercy, compassion and care. It has been during those times that I just had to trust His plans working out for His ultimate purposes for me. I know you can probably share similar times in your own life. Let those precious times be a reminder to always seek Him first and not our own power, abilities or talents to guide us through just Christ and Him alone.

Bowman is Minister of Connection, First Church, Brandon, and a speaker for women's events.



Bible Studies for Life
with Beth S. Bowman

Revivals & Homecomings

► **Concord Church, Yazoo City:** Revival, Aug. 2-5; David Eldridge, speaker; Rick Kennedy, music; Barry Ward, pastor.
► **Society Hill Church, Oakvale:** Revival, Aug. 2-5; Sun., 11 a.m.; lunch served, and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; William Wall,

speaker; Terry Wallace, music; Jake Staten, pastor.

► **Darlove Church, Darlove:** Homecoming, Aug. 2; service, 10:30 a.m. special worship music followed by covered dish luncheon; John Reed, speaker.

► **Pleasant Hill Church, Bogus**

Chitto: Homecoming, Aug. 2; services, 9:45 a.m. with music and history presentation, followed by dinner; Steve Bishop and Roy McHenry leading in worship.

► **Sunrise Church, Petak:** Homecoming, Aug. 2; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m., followed by dinner on the grounds; Bob Rogers, speaker.

► **Sardis Church, Smith**

County: Homecoming and revival, Aug. 2-5; Sun., service, 10:30 a.m., followed by covered dish lunch and afternoon song service; Brian Fitzsimmons, speaker; Tim Robertson, music; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Mike Grenn, speaker; Mark Hamilton, music.

► **Beacon Church, Hattiesburg:** 50th anniversary, Aug. 2; Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship,

11 a.m., followed by food and fellowship and old-fashioned sing.

► **Rock Bluff Church, Daniel:** Homecoming, Aug. 2; services, 11 a.m., followed by lunch; Jim Futral, speaker; Judy Rhodes Davis, music; Donnie Stuart, pastor.

► **Calvary Church, Eupora:** Revival, Aug. 2-5; Sun., 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Randy Futral, speaker; Jimmy Watson, music.

Eight traits of a missions-centered congregation

ASIA (BP) — God chose the church to be His messenger and make a powerful impact on the world. It doesn't matter if it has 10,000 or 20 members, a church is called to reach the nations with the Gospel. The International Mission Board asked pastors and mission/mobilization specialists around the globe to give some insights into what makes missions-centered churches.

They boiled it down to eight traits that indicate this type of congregation:

1. Has a "now" mentality. The thought of "being in on what God is doing right now" drives this church. They understand most generations before them have not had the opportunity they have today to go to the nations. Not only do unreached people often live in their communities, but global travel is relatively easy now. They can go to India and back in less than a week. They can actually meet the last unreached people groups (less than two percent Christian) on earth, not just see their pictures in a magazine.

2. Is in it for the long haul. Rather than asking, "What fits my church?" a missions-centered one asks, "What needs to be done and where?" They are awakened and consumed by worshipping God and making Him known to all peoples. No matter if the God-given task takes one day or 20 years, they are committed. This collective burden is met with a sustainable plan.

3. Has cheerleaders. Note the plural. Not one cheerleader

Rather than asking, "What fits my church?" a missions-centered one asks, "What needs to be done and where?" They are awakened and consumed by worshipping God and making Him known to all peoples.

but many! Yes, the pastor may lead the way but what happens if he moves to another church? Does this stop a missions-centered church? There are other leaders invested and sold out to the vision. They are the mobilizers — point people. A missions-centered church knows that it will be no more engaged in missions than its leaders.

4. Spends time on their knees praying together. They are ready to tackle spiritual warfare head on. The thought that no other church in the world is praying for a specific unengaged, unreached people group really matters to them. They know that it is their responsibility to come up with a church-planting strategy where none has been done before. They believe that starts with prayer.

5. Is flexible and steadfast. The phrase, "we've never done it that way," spurs the missions-centered church to break the mold. They strive to be creative, knowing that trends

and needs may change but the basics remain the same — sharing the love of Christ and bringing people to Him.

6. Trains and equips. There is an intentional equipping of the church to live out God's mission plan. The congregation is disciplined in God's passion for the nations. They are hungry for training in evangelism and strengthening local believers. They pass their knowledge on to others, teaching what they've learned along the way.

7. Networks with others. Understanding that they don't know everything, missions-centered churches are great networkers. They are aware of others involved in similar projects and readily seek advice. These relationships create a unique synergy that leads to increased effectiveness and a greater impact on the people they are trying to reach, whether that's locally or globally.

8. Sends. Churches focused on the lost try to plug into the life of the world around them. They understand that being sent isn't a future event or even an overseas calling. Being sent is a book of Acts lifestyle — a way of living — the way of Jesus. There are still more than 3,000 people groups with no one intentionally working among them to see churches planted. The missions-centered church will roll up their sleeves and get their hands dirty for Jesus. This kind of church will ask God to use them no matter the cost.

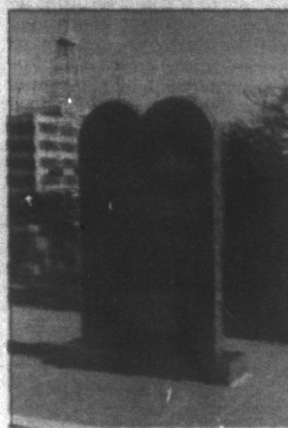


REACHING OUT — A missions-centered church reaches out to internationals living in the United States and in other countries, like this unidentified Baptist woman from Arkansas teaching South Asian children in an undisclosed location. (BP photo courtesy of IMB)



FOCUSED ON GOSPEL — A missions-centered church reaches out to internationals living in the United States and in other countries, like this unidentified Baptist volunteer handing out Bibles to Chinese tourists at a popular vacation spot in Southeast Asia. (BP photo courtesy of IMB)

Oklahoma high court ruling may have national impact



ENDANGERED — The Oklahoma Supreme Court recently ruled that a Ten Commandments display at the state capitol is unconstitutional, making uncertain the future of the display at its current location. (BP photo courtesy LSB Photo)

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP) — If allowed to stand, an Oklahoma Supreme Court ruling banning a privately-funded Ten Commandments display on the state capitol grounds could lead to the removal of similar displays across America, a free speech advocacy group has argued.

Despite the Oklahoma high court's ruling, Republican Gov. Mary Fallin said a six-foot, granite Ten Commandments monument will remain at the capitol while Republican Attorney General Scott Pruitt files an appeal and state legislators consider a measure to let Oklahoma residents vote on striking an amendment from the state constitution cited by justices as rationale for ordering the commandments removed.

The American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) in Washington, D.C., warned in a news release that at least 36 other states have adopted similar constitutional amendments and could be liable to lawsuits challenging their Ten Commandments' displays.

"The Oklahoma Court's decision could (and likely will) be used as persuasive authority to essentially circumvent the United States Supreme Court's hard-fought First Amendment decisions," the ACLJ statement said. "In other words, the Oklahoma Supreme Court's novel interpretation" of the amendment "could jeopardize the display of privately donated monuments with religious text or symbols across the county even where the United States Supreme Court's First Amendment jurisprudence has allowed such displays."

The Oklahoma amendment in question states, "No public money or property shall ever be appropriated, applied, donated, or used, directly or indirectly, for the use, benefit, or support of any sect, church, denomination, or system of religion, or for the use, benefit, or support of any priest, preacher, minister, or other religious teacher or dignitary, or sectarian institution as such."

The court ruled the Ten Commandments display violates the ban of public money or land being used to benefit a religion.

Anthony Jordan, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma in Oklahoma City, released a statement defending the display following the Supreme Court's ruling.

"The 10 Commandments are foundational to our laws and legal system in America," Jordan said. "Look at the United States Supreme Court building and you see a depiction of Moses holding the 10 Commandments. We recognize that these Commandments are important legally, historically, and spiritually, not only to Christians, but a vast majority of faith groups as well. So we strongly favor the public display of the 10 Commandments in Oklahoma and across this great land."

Fallin said in justifying her decision to let the monument remain for now, "Oklahoma is a state where we respect the rule of law, and we will not ig-

nore the state courts or their decisions. However, we are also a state with three co-equal branches of government."

While the executive branch appeals the ruling, the legislative branch will work to place a constitutional amendment on the ballot possibly before the November 2016 elections, the Tulsa World reported.

Fallin noted the monument "is a privately funded tribute to historical events, not a taxpayer funded endorsement of any religion, as some have alleged."

The Oklahoma Supreme Court said its June 30 ruling was made "with no regard to federal jurisprudence" regarding the First Amendment's Establishment Clause, which states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

Pruitt, the Oklahoma attorney general, told the Tulsa World he believes the Ten Commandments monument is protected under the federal constitution.